

The Pathology Of Primary Teachers' Professional Development In Iran

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Abstract

There is a universal conformity that learning to teach is a continuing procedure. There has been growing recognition that teachers are the most important factor in student attainment. However, most of them especially new teachers are not adequately prepared to meet the requirements of their students, and many experienced teachers have yet to adjust to new standards. This paper examines how stakeholders understand the shortages of teachers' professional development (TPD) with respect to in-service training for primary teachers. The aims of this paper are to define pathology, explain educational system in Iran, elaborate primary teacher education, clarify professional development, define teaching, discuss the necessity of pathology, state the necessity of teachers' training, and explain teachers' education.

Keywords : Pathology; Primary teachers' training; Teachers' professional development; Educational system.

Introduction

Professional development is one of the major concerns in the contemporary era and the calendar and history of education cannot show a bigger identification of the value of professional development. Every new plan needs to be changed, reorganized, and it should emphasize professional development as a main vehicle. Therefore, teachers need to expand their knowledge and improve their skills over the years of their careers. Unfortunately, the needs for valuable professional development for those in the teaching profession all too often go unmet (Fathi et al, 2009).

Every action which enhances the skills, knowledge or understanding between teachers, and their effectiveness in schools were called professional development. It is the whole thing that the teachers do to stay progress and remain up to date, starting with training on their job thoroughly (DfES, 2000). It is very important that people are not only trained to reach an acceptable standard but also be able to provide the necessary proof. On the other hand, the managers, school principals and other stakeholders should have the ability to prove that the duty of concern has been practiced, regardless training (Gordon, 2008).

In fact, nowadays, it is impossible to find an organization which does not deal with the professional development of its employees. Additionally, taking consideration into the diversity of job variety, the scope of development and basic human learning limitations, the abilities and skills of people increasingly have become out of date in professional areas. This trend led to occupation inadequacies in the contemporary organizations.

For this reason, training and development of staff has become one of the main concerns of managers in organizations and institutions. Consequently, professional development of employees has been given much more attention in the recent decades. Meeting training needs, program development, providing resources and facilitating the program implementation are considered important and critical to face the organizational challenges (Abtahi, 1989).

Definition of Pathology

Salah (2003,p, 3) believes that pathology originated from medical and biological science to human science and social science since 19th century and this is established on similarities that Scientifics found between body illnesses and social critical. In educational researches this word uses in relation to inefficiency, problems, deficiency and survey their reasons. Besides, he adds, in educational science researches, the word of Pathology means” inadequacy, problems and deficiencies” in educational activities (Salah, 2003, p,3).

According to the Fathi et al. (2010) pathology defined as “examination, specifying the in efficiencies, and inadequacies” of professional development programs. Study and recognition disorder root in organism, the problems and the damages existing in a system are taken into account and accordingly the research unit reviews the organization for finding the major issues and the probable solutions (Fathi et al, 2009).Some researchers like Holzel et al. (1999) asserted that pathology interactive will provide just one means of learning and professional development.

Overview of Educational System in Iran

The Ministry of Education (MoE) in Iran as a specialized system carries the responsibility of managing and planning a variety of educational activities in all different levels. From the organizational structure point of view, the system is the initiator and the holder of general and special training functions. The teachers employed by the MoE to work in schools should have appropriate opportunities for professional development and being up-to-date in the continuously changing education system. The education system in Iran as well as many other countries is encountering with complicated subjects that if not to be considered and fixed in time, they can be led to other complex situations in the educational system.

The relevant evidence to this claim is the presence of various problems in different sectors of the society which could be sketched in education system structure and its practice (Aghazade et al, 2004).Iran basically has a centralized educational system and the majority decisions on the management of all the educational levels (primary, secondary and high schools) are done at national level and the MoE .Indeed education has seriously brought under a single authority and is separated in 12- K education and higher education in Iran. The level of K-12 education is organized by the MoE and the step of higher education is controlled by the Ministry of Science and Technology.

Pre-primary school (Pish-Dabestani) starts at ages 4 and 5 for 2 years and this period is not compulsory as there is an optional choice for parents. Primary school (Dabestan) starts at the age of 6 for about 6 years(MoE, 2012). Middle school, recognized as course series (Rahnamayi), departs from the grade of seventh to ninth. High school (Dabirestan), for which the last three years is not obligatory and this is separated between academic, vocational/technical and Mathematic physical, while each program has its own fields (MoE, 2004).

In fact, High school Diploma is required before pursuing to higher education and as a final point to pass the public University entrance exam (Konkour). Higher education is certified by diverse levels of diplomas: For instance, Fogh-e-Diplom or Kardani after 2 years of higher education, Karshenasi (known under the name “license”) is obtained after 4 years of higher education (Bachelor Degree). Karshenasi- Arshad is gained after 2 more years of study (Master’s Degree). Last but not least, a student needs to take an additional examination that permits the applicant to follow a Ph.D. program.

Definition of Primary Teacher Education

Clement et al. (2000) believed that there is no way to becoming a certified teacher easily. The purest route stays deciding early in one's undergraduate job to minor or major in education, getting a bachelor's degree and there are several routes to certification. An individual status keeps hold of the right to put their teacher certification standards.

According to Clement et al. (2000) teachers can begin teaching after having completed some teacher education courses, and then they may complete their teacher certification through a college, in the district where they teach, or through a nearby regional office of education. Regional offices of education have different names in different states and have traditionally been agencies that provided continuing education for practicing teacher and administrators. Teachers are supposed to be monitored closely by mentors and administrators when hired without full certification or the benefits of student teaching.

Indeed, new teachers very quickly develop assumptions about the practices which allow them to cope with the complexities of teaching and being members of staff (Day et al. 1987). A large amount of human and financial resources are allocated for administrating such training courses annually. It is necessary to use all resources effectively in order to achieve the desired professional development goals of teachers in primary education. Problems and inadequacies in the teacher's professional development (TPD) are amongst the issues that are given less attention and consideration (Sarkar Arani, 2006).

Definition of Professional Development

There is a universal conformity that learning to teach is an enduring procedure. This idea of continuing and lifelong professional learning for teachers in all fields has been emphasized by several researchers, and providing significant professional development for in-service teachers is seen as central to this aim. There has been growing recognition that teachers are the most important factor in student attainment. However, most of them especially new teachers are not adequately prepared to meet the requirements of their students, and many experienced teachers have yet to adjust to new standards (Atay, 2008). Just like practitioners in other professions, teachers need to expand their knowledge and also improve their skills over the years of their careers.

Unfortunately, the needs for valuable professional development for those in the teaching profession all too often go unmet (Bubb, 2004). Some researches like Dean (1991) showed professional development as a process which teachers turn into much more professional. A piece of this development is the combining of particular skills, knowledge and understanding. Thus, professional development can be seen as an increase in some parts of professionalism and can correctly be used for the development of people or groups if the rationale of the movement is to develop the professionalism. Professional development is higher than all about confirming the experience for students in the classroom. It is concerned to give advantages to everybody in the educational system especially schools.

In terms of professional development, performances set from short-term, single-shot courses' experiences to multi year programs. A number of teacher enrichment programs have a short term workshop in which a specific method is described or a new strategy introduced. Another one is a long term workshop that it is lasted some weeks in duration and may perhaps consist of year-round proceedings activities. There are also programs founded on multi-year set-up, where teachers go through the levels of training (Frechtling et al, 1995).

On the other hand, by means of this enlarged recognition, the examination grade shows an improvement. Numbers of subjects have been increased according to the effectiveness of all shapes of professional development in education. These subjects have higher expectations for provable results. All the societies' members such as politicians, legislator, funding agencies, and the general public would like to know if this professional development program really makes a difference (Guskey,2000).

Definition of Teaching

Teaching is a complex endeavor, involving classroom management, lesson's preparation and organization of teaching and learning activities, creating and maintaining a certain climate, evaluation and feedback. There is consensus on what composes good teaching.

Researches pointed out that it stayed complex to reach stability among personal and organizational needs (Brophy, 2001). In fact teachers have a vital role to any endeavor to grow education. It is important that not all teachers are effective (Coggshall et al.2009).The role of the teacher as the exclusive holder of expert knowledge is being worn away by communication technologies. As the social framework of society is changing, Day and Sachs (2004) recognize that the educative role of teachers becomes more complex.In a sense, the teachers are one of the important foundations of all educational systems. In many countries, extensive programs like maintaining and building good teachers have turned into a fundamental strategy.

Indeed, teachers' roles and functions are relatively similar in most countries. Usually, teachers are expected to possess all the scientific and technical merits, to dominate course contents and apply appropriate methods and techniques for training, in order to be an appropriate model to educate the youngsters (Fathi ,2000).

The Necessity of The Pathology

The main reason of pathology is to find deficiencies. The information gained of the pathology can be used as guidelines to plan future continuing teachers' professional developments (TPD) or in-service training activities and to predict problems that are likely to occur. The feedback will be precious to all stakeholders involved. (Fathi et al ,2010).The feedback will be precious to all stakeholders involved. The MoE and teachers' professional development (TPD) program organizers need to know deficiencies, and shortages points, if they are doing the right things accurately. Data from the pathology will provide evidence that can be used to correct mistakes or to maintain an exemplary process.

Thus, this pathology will improve a knowledge base process of teacher's professional development (TPD) to provide effective and well-organized in-service training in the future. In general, if teachers' training is to be improved, it must depend on those who are in direct contact to the students. Since ,the means of pathology in this article is identify and recognize professional development system of primary teachers ,thus this word can be defined as "examination, specifying the inefficiencies, and inadequacies" of professional development programs. By pathology the programs will help to identify the program gaps in relation to identify needs. Responds from teachers to survive in a reform environment needs to be discovered.

The Necessity of Teacher Training

An analytical look into the improvement programs for solving the education issues in prosperous countries reveals that education program planners believe that every academic level and different forms of learning bear their own problems. In order to recognize the issues and coming into decisions for solving them it is necessary to identify the problems and inadequacies of each area to be analyzed separately.During the past decades, training has turned into one of the professional issues of the teachers and important priorities of education. In this respect, there are more human and financial resources implemented every year. Performance, effectiveness, and quality of these programs have been the objective of many researches.

In Iran, there has been a deficiency of focus on teacher training system, in society's problems which can be seen like need of honor and merit of the profession of teaching, small sense of services to the land and the nation (British Council, 2010). The ultimate goal of the policy of the MoE is to produce manpower and technocrat community that are able to compete at the international level and indirectly can contribute to the development of the country. To this end, schools have a responsibility to provide each pupil with these skills and knowledge competency necessary for their academic, economic and social growth.

It is also the responsibility of the MoE to provide well qualified teachers to deliver perfect instruction. In fact, teachers are the mediators between curricula, materials, educational goals, and the students. Current schemes and advances show the government's consciousness of the troubles existing in the training of teachers. The Seventh Point of the Charter of the Education Revolution in Iran focuses on the necessity of teachers' professional development in the achievement of the nation's objectives: while teacher-training plays a basic role in the country's education planning and social and scientific growth, all organizations concerned with teacher- training programs should make their attempt to reinforce and regulate them to meet the requirements of the nations (Tahemi, 2004).

The importance of teachers' professional development (TPD) is fully recognized by Iranian authorities and in the recent years there have been some activities and programs for teachers' development. However, there are not enough evidences on systematic planning and administration of the continuous professional development for the teachers. The results from the selected programs have shown that teachers' professional development were not successful as expected in terms of reaching the predetermined goals. Studies (Ghoshooni, 1995; Rezazadeh Goli, 1996; Tarighi Taher, 1999; Aghazadeh et al. 2004; Fathi, Boghozian & Toorani, 2005; & Safavi, 2008) have shown that professional training for teachers in the educational system in some states encountered many issues and problems.

Professional development activities were found to be ineffective in many aspects due to the decreasing number of staff to participate. Most of in-service trainings were ineffective in attaining the pre-determined goals. The most important reason for this breakdown is that the training lacks the elements of advancing self understanding which is essential for self-development and enhancement (CIDREE,2010). The reasons of failing of some teachers' professional development (TPD) activities have become the subject of many discussions. There have been valuable efforts in Iranian education system towards training and improvement; however, in the current situation the education system of the country needs new perspective towards improvement and professional promotion of the primary teachers. This could be possibly run only through independent research and studies about the evaluation of teachers' professional development (TPD) in Iran.

It seems that using a diversity of both formal and informal experiences can be a contribution to the development of the teacher's professional skills and knowledge. Over the last years the perspective of professional development has changed. Professional development has come to be observed as a continuing process, including several forms of experiences and opportunities that are automatically aimed to motivate the development and growth of the teacher. In most developing countries such as Iran, one of the most important concerns in the context of teachers' education was the efficiency of teachers' educational programs and training.

Teachers' Education

Some researchers like (Ighohwo, Merrow & Shahmohammadi,2011) believe that teachers are known as 'nation-builders.' It can be seen that most societies hold the same roles with teachers and they are very significant. The best expectation of a perfect teacher has certainly changed according to time. Previously, a teacher was known as the spring of all science and knowledge, but in our time this idea does not survive. The teachers need to understand that a "change agent" is not as a simple receiver of knowledge and skills. In this situation, with regards to transfer, compulsory changes should focus on the current and the new requirement of teachers, in the diverse area of the occupation. The professional development of teachers is considered as a personal and group process that must be done in their work location.

There is a need to investigate and expand more useful means of improving educational staff to encounter the challenges of changing the world and for concentrating the opinions of teacher educators on conceptualizing the environment and a range of professional education at the entire levels. Teacher training programs for the future should provide the new and recent teacher roles, usage of the instrument technology to generate new move towards to teaching-learning approaches and get into concern the requirements of learners, particularly regarding the groups now coming into school in Iran consequently of free education (Shahmohammadi,2012).

In other word, Stronge et al (2011) asserts that, a better perception of what comprises teacher efficiency has significant implications for decision making regarding to preparation, recruitment, compensation, in-service professional development, and evaluation of teachers. When managers seek to employ effective or at least, promising teachers, for example, they need to understand what characterizes them. Recently, educators have begun to emphasize the importance of connecting teacher efficiencies to a range of features of teacher education and area or school personnel administration, including:

- a. Identifying the knowledge, needs and skills of pre-service teachers
- b. Recruiting and inducting potential of effective teachers,
- c. Designing and implementing professional development
- d. Conducting valid and credible evaluations of teachers, and
- e. Dismissing ineffective teachers while retaining effective ones (Odden, 2004; Darling- Hammond & Bransford, 2005; National Academy of Education, 2008; Hanushek, 2010).

Conclusion

Professional development of teachers does not guarantee teachers' skills and attitudes instruction. Teachers, educators, managers, schools' principals and all stockholders implicated in the training of teaching and learning environments should be convinced of the usefulness and benefits of the ways in improving teaching and learning. These people engaged a deep understanding of how individuals are influenced by the plan and what capability required as they contribute in the training programs.' To attain a superior understanding of what the teacher has gained, it is significant to get a closer look on the teachers' training aspect and continuous professional development(CPD). Educators can have a better understanding on how teachers can be helped; the consequences possibly will show tips for improvement of latest series and plans for developing the standard of professional development programs.

The reasons of failing of some professional development activities related to a teacher development have been the subject of many discussions. There have been valuable efforts in Iranian educational system towards training and improvement. Infact, the educational system of the country needs new perspective towards improvement and professional promotion of the primary teachers. This could only be possible through independent research and studies about the pathology of teachers' professional development(TPD) system. Professional development for teachers especially for primary teachers encounters with some serious challenges and shortages. Ignoring these elements can bring some major inconsistencies in teaching and learning activities in primary education as an important level of education.

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